



Summary of

2001 USDA
Data Users Meeting

October 15, 2001
Chicago, Illinois

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250

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2001 USDA Data Users Meeting

October 15, 2001
Holiday Inn Mart Plaza

Agenda

12:30 p.m. Registration

1:00 Introduction and overview

Fred Vogel
National Agricultural Statistics Service

1:10 Agency reviews

Weldon Hall
Agricultural Marketing Service

Joy Harwood
Economic Research Service

Eric Wenberg
Foreign Agriculture Service

Steve Wiyatt
National Agricultural Statistics Service

Donald Wilhite
National Drought Mitigation Center

Gerald Bange
World Agricultural Outlook Board

2:00 Open forum for questions and comments from participants

3:15 Break

3:30 ***Special: Agricultural Monitoring in Unfriendly Places**
Scott Thompson

Open forum continued

5:00 Concluding comments





Agricultural Marketing Service

The Agricultural Marketing Service includes six commodity divisions - - Cotton, Dairy, Fruit and Vegetable, Livestock and Seed, Poultry, and Tobacco. The divisions employ specialists who provide standardization, grading and market news services for those commodities. They enforce such Federal Laws as the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act and the Federal Seed Act.

AMS commodity divisions also oversee marketing agreements and orders, administer research and promotion programs, and purchase commodities for Federal food programs.

CURRENT ISSUES OF INTERESTS

MANDATORY PRICE REPORTING:

The Livestock Mandatory Reporting Act of 1999 (Act) was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Clinton on October 22, 1999, as a part of the Fiscal Year 2000 Agriculture Appropriation Bill. The objectives of the Act are to provide information that is readily understood by producers, packers, and other market participants, including information with respect to pricing, contracting for purchase, and supply and demand conditions for livestock, livestock production, and livestock products; improving the price and supply reporting services of USDA; and encouraging competition in the marketplace for livestock and livestock products.

Reporting Act Status

- A technical error was discovered in the computer program that affected the calculation of beef cutout and primal cut values for the period April 3, through May 11, 2001. AMS released corrected values for this period on May 25, 2001.
- Secretary of Agriculture, Ann Veneman, appointed an independent review team to conduct a thorough review of the mandatory price reporting program. Their charge was to examine the mandatory system process and procedures, review performance of the system to date, assess the consequences of misreporting of the boxed beef cutout values, examine alternatives for applying the confidentiality guidelines, and recommend actions that can be taken to enhance the integrity of the system and ensure accurate reporting in the future.
- The review team completed their report on July 2, 2001, and recommended several measures to ensure the effectiveness and reliability of this program. The program has been corrected and reports tested according to the review team recommendations.

- Revision of the confidentiality guidelines used to determine the release of collected mandatory data was implemented on August 20, 2001.
- The new A3/70/20≅ confidentiality guideline will require the following three conditions:
- At least three reporting entities need to provide at least 50 percent of the time over the most recent 60-day period.
- No single reporting entity may provide more than 70 percent of the data for a report over the most recent 60-day time period.
- No single reporting entity may be the sole reporting entity for an individual report more than 20 percent of the time over the most recent 60-day time period.
- USDA anticipates that the adoption of the new A3/70/20≅ confidentiality guideline is release to the public. If the A3/70/20≅ guideline had been applied between April 2 and June 14, fewer than two percent of the daily swine and cattle reports would have been withheld from publication.

The Act, proposed rule, USDA press release, and comments USDA has received can be viewed over the AMS website at: http://www.ams.usda.gov/ls/mncs/LS_MPR.htm

PRICE DISCOVERY:

Poultry Market News Branch is reviewing the methods currently used in determining the value of shell eggs delivered into retail channels throughout the country. In addition, they are researching various pricing mechanisms (formulas, benchmarks, differentials, indexes, etc.) which could be used to help develop guidelines to better define the value of shell eggs going to retailers or first receivers. The project is in an early stage of development.

PILOT PROJECT FOR DATA ENHANCEMENTS:

Accuate project – This AMD Market News effort will be piloted in FV, but all of the six Branches will be able to enhance the services they offer to their customers with the addition of this product. Two of the key enhancements will be:

- the ability to “push” notice of the release of a particular report of interest to customers, thus saving them the time and effort to continuing to check our Website for that report.
- an ability for customers to do historical data searches of the Market News Information System (MNIS). They are currently limited to the archive of actual reports, with do direct access to the MNIS.

INTERNET SITE ENHACEMENTS:

- Direct Trade Historical Livestock Market News Reports can be accessed at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/lsg/directtrade/directtrade.htm>
- International Livestock and Meat Reports can be accessed at http://www.ams.usda.gov/lsg/mncls/lis_int.htm
- Includes Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Mexico, and Japan.
- Increased the archive capabilities of AMS Market Reports section to include more report days. This will allow industry to access a larger number of historical reports.
- Fruit and Vegetable enhanced the customer service center with online information that will assist industry at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/fv/mnmovement.htm>
- Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Shipments Annual Reports were added to the site at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/fv/mnmovement.htm>
- Poultry Market News has begun to post graphs depicting data for broilers/fryers, turkeys, and eggs. Currently, there are nine graphs and plans for the future include further developments and more graphs. These may be found at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/poultry/mncls/Graphs.graphs.htm>
- The Cotton Program has added the Weekly Cotton Quality Data Files to the Cotton Program's Market News website, where they can be downloaded at no cost. The cotton program decided last year that it could utilize a concept similar to the National Database to offer classing data to the industry and at the same time protect grower anonymity. The information Technology (IT) Staff created two data files containing raw classing data. They are the Weekly Cotton Quality Data Files. Each file contains the classification information for all bales classed in a given week and contains data on both Upland and Pima cotton. One file identifies each bale by Classing Office. The other file identifies each bale by State. The classing data is stripped of all gin bale identification and cannot be traced back to individual gins or growers. Two new files are created each week. Users can accumulate season-to-date classings by downloading each week's data files.

CHANGES TO AMS REPORTS AND NEW REPORTS:

NEW:

- New Report – National Daily Direct Hog Prior Day – Slaughtered Swine Report, includes new cost price information, live and carcass average weight data, and average carcass characteristic measurements for all swine slaughtered on the previous day, categorized by purchase type. In addition, the report furnishes information on the volume of swine that packers have scheduled for slaughter during each of the next 14 days. A base cost section,

which includes swine cost to packers at various lean percentages, will subsequently be added at a later date whenever full testing is complete.

- New Report – National Weekly Lamb Carcass Report. This new report to be published each Wednesday, will include information on all carcass lamb sales that have occurred nationwide between the previous Thursday and the last mandatory reporting period on Wednesday afternoon. By using a Thursday-Wednesday reporting format, in accordance with the standard trading cycle of the domestic lamb carcass industry, the content of the new report will provide a more accurate reflection of emerging trends in market activity and prices.
- New Report – Central U.S. Daily Lamb Carcass Report. This new daily report will contain information on all carcass lamb sales submitted daily by packers located in Colorado, Texas, and Iowa, which should permit lamb carcass sales information to be published more frequently than when coverage was restricted to more geographically narrow regions.
- Revised Report – National Daily 5-Day Rolling Average Boxed Lamb Cut Report B Negotiated Sales. This revised daily report will feature a 5-day rolling average of reported values submitted nationwide about negotiated sales of boxed lamb cuts. The use of 5-day rolling average, rather than the actual daily values, should enable USDA to publish a substantially greater volume of information on negotiated lamb cut sales than ever before without divulging proprietary information.
- New Report – National Weekly Boxed Beef Cutout and Boxed Beef Cuts Report B Negotiated Sales. Thinly traded boxed beef items, which cannot be included in daily reports without jeopardizing confidentiality, will now be reported in the revised National Weekly Boxed Beef Cutout and Boxed Beef Cuts Report. Reported primal cut values and boxed beef cutout values will be calculated from all mandatory information submitted on a daily basis, whether or not the information has been published previously.
- Fruit and Vegetable – Began f.o.b., or shipping point, reporting of cantaloupes from IN, GA, FL, and CA, as well as UT and NV onions, OK watermelons, and CA spinach and grape type tomatoes.
- Poultry – A report showing the monthly weighted average prices and volumes of bulk ice-packed broiler/fryer parts delivered into the Northeast.
- A report showing the monthly weighted average prices and volumes of bulk ice-packed broiler/fryer parts on a F.O.B. shipper dock in the Southern States area.
- A weekly summary report that contains market information of particular interest to the Delmarva broiler/fryer industry. The new report will be available by fax or e-mail.

Tobacco – All narrative and statistical reports on Flue-cured tobacco have been modified to accommodate the new Northern and Southern Flue-cured areas. These reports include data by state within the marketing areas for both contract and auction sales.

CHANGES:

- Fruit and Vegetable – Continue to consolidate additional services in the Fresno Customer Service Center; such as. Transportation Reports, Apple Processing Report and a Special Request Section.
- In June 2000, we established the Market Information of the Americas with 18 countries in attendance at the inaugural meeting in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
- The Cotton Program reached a mutually beneficial agreement with The Seam, an online business-to-business marketplace for cotton, to obtain unlimited access to sales recap data (not including information identifying the buyer or the seller). The Seam is a transparent marketplace in which many of the major U.S. cotton merchants, cooperatives, and textile mills have invested. The Seam guarantees each transaction on its site. In return for access to The Seam sales data, which represents an increasing percentage of the U.S. crop, The Seam will have access to USDA classing data for each bale offered for sale on its site, thereby guaranteeing that bales offered for sale carry the official USDA classing data. This agreement is expected to enhance the establishment of cotton spot quotations. The intention long-term, since the sales data is retrieved electronically, is to create computer programming to facilitate working the recaps and comparing them to current quotations.
- Cotton Program Market Reporters Assigned Remote Lan Dial (RLD) Phone Numbers: All Market Reporters for the AMS, Cotton Program, Market News Branch recently obtained Remote Lan Dial (RLD) phone numbers for use with their laptop computers. These numbers give the reporters access through the AMS Network to the Internet and to Outlook Express. Market Reporters in travel status can now transmit spreadsheets with quotations differences to the Branch office. They can also now access web sites trading cotton on-line, thereby keeping abreast of this market source while traveling. Both new capabilities should facilitate the collection and assessment of cotton spot sales.
- The Cotton Program revised all Market News reports containing Pima quotations and quality measurements. These modifications reflected changes to Pima classification with the new crop year.
- Poultry – The turkey portion of the weekly Live Poultry Slaughtered Under Federal Inspection report now contains comparable data for the same week prior year for both hens and toms. The new information has been well received by the industry.
- The weekly Easter and Central Region Mechanically Separated Chicken report now show all trading activity on an F.O.B. shipper dock or equivalent basis. Transactions can be compared more accurately between and within regions since delivery costs are excluded from the series.
- The Tuesday Delmarva Broiler/Fryer Market report includes a summary of the weekly broiler/fryer slaughter volume together with average live weights. The additional information improves the accuracy of the report for production managers and marketers.

- The Wednesday Eggs Processed Under Federal Inspection report includes percentage changes from last week and same week prior year as well as percentage changes for year-to-date as compared to the previous year. In addition, the report includes average yield per case of eggs broken with and without volumes of inedible product.
- The Turkey Market Reports, mailed three times weekly, will no longer be available on a subscription basis. That report will be replaced by a new one-page daily report that can be faxed or e-mailed.
- Tobacco – With the decline of auction volume and the increase of contract volume, the marketing areas for the 2001 flue-cured tobacco crop were changed to provide both types of sales. The former Old Belt in Virginia and North Carolina, and the Eastern North Carolina Belt were combined into the Northern Flue-cured area. The former South Carolina and Border North Carolina Belt, and the Florida and Georgia Belt were combined into the Southern Flue-cured auction area. Although type numbers 11 through 14 are still being used on some statistical reports, their meanings have been modified this season to accommodate the contract and auction figures. They no longer represent specific marketing areas.

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ERS is working to enhance product consistency, transparency, and Timeliness. We are also enhancing the value-added nature of our work And strengthening the ties between our research and outlook programs. We are also very much focused on integrating our work across agencies to Build on the unique strengths of our USDA partners in analyzing and Communicating analysis and information to users.

Improved Quality of Communication

Conference Calls – Leland Southard of ERS coordinates the monthly hog conference call, which includes analysts from WAOB, NADS, and other USDA agencies as well as extension economists at land grant universities. This summer, ERS also initiated a corn/soybean conference call, which was held twice (in June and in August). These calls offer a very useful mechanism for USDA to exchange key information among analysts.

Newsletters – ERS will be converting all periodic reports to electronic newsletters as of January 1, 2002. Newsletters have been initiated for fruit and tree nuts and vegetables and melons on a more timely basis: rather than appearing four times per year, they are each appearing six times per year. Sugar and tobacco will appear on the same schedule in 2002 as in the past, but as electronic newsletters. The field crop (feed, wheat. Oil crops, rice, and tobacco) and livestock, dairy, and poultry newsletters will have the same schedule as in past years. Hard-copy yearbooks will be available for all crops in 2002.

The major difference we're introducing across all newsletters is consistency (all will be in pdf, all will feature the new "outlook" logo, and our goal is or each to include charts and more graphics). Please provide us with feedback on our field crop reports – How do you feel about timeliness (for field crops, ascii format) vs. pdf format and charts/graphics on a slightly delayed (perhaps a day or two) schedule?

E-Outlooks – This summer, ERS introduced "e-outlooks" (essentially, "special articles" on timely topics that at one time appeared only in yearbooks or periodic reports). These articles appear as stand-alone electronic documents, with notification e-mailed to newsletter subscribers. Since August, e-outlooks have been issued on horticulture and the WTO and on the livestock year-in-review and projections for 2001.

Agriculture and Trade Reports – These "ATR" reports are longer reports that compliment our newsletters and e-outlooks. They are monograph-length reports that bring together the best of our research and outlook program. So far, an ATR has been issued this year on the changing structure of food consumption and trade, and two will be published in the next month: one on the commodity situation in China, and the other on the competitive position of the U.S. relative to Brazil and Argentina.

Databases – Last year, ERS initiated several databases, including the Feed Grains Data Delivery System and the Baseline Data Delivery System. We will be soon launching a red meats database, which contains the same data found in the Red Meats Yearbook. All include a queriable feature, “standard query” spreadsheets tables, and an automatic charting feature. Would you like to see changes or additions to our existing databases?

Program Integration/Efforts Across Agencies

“Centers of Excellence” – Milton Erickson, and ERS employee on detail to the WAOB, is coordinating a proposed USDA effort that focuses on the development of web-based “centers of excellence” for key commodities and issues. These centers will enhance user access to critical data, information, and analysis across ERS, WAOB, FAS, AMS, FSA, and NASS through “one-stop web shopping.”

ARMS Budgetary Needs – The Agricultural Resource Management Study (ARMS), which involves ERS and NASS, is increasingly under budgetary pressure. ERS and NASS would like to enhance the ARMS sample size, increase commodity coverage for cost of production data, and heighten our ability to provide state-level and disaggregated estimates for different sizes and types of farms.

Trade Data Coordination – A FAS-ERS-WAOB committee has been organized to resolve trade data discrepancies and to work on establishing a single USDA trade database. This committee oversees how USDA manages its trade data and is working with the Census Bureau to establish procedures for correcting errors.

New Initiatives

Retail Price Reporting – ERS is working with Blattberg, Chaney, and Associates to produce a database that uses retail grocery store scanner data to create average monthly prices and quantities sold for selected cuts of meat. The database will be comparable to BLS data for the same cuts of meat and will cover the majority of the retail meat business. We expect to have a publicly available database by early 2002.

Redesign of *Agricultural Outlook* Magazine – ERS will be redesigning *Agricultural Outlook* over the next year. The magazine will have a new look, and emphasize closer linkages between the magazine and the ERS website. Do you have suggestions for any changes that you would like to see?

New Briefing Rooms – ERS currently has in place approximately 70 briefing rooms. Over the next year, we are planning new briefing room in Japan, macroeconomic linkages with agriculture, and energy. Are there others you would like to see?

Questions or Comments? Please address them to Joy Harwood, Deputy Director for Market Outlook, at jharwood@ers.usda.gov or 202-694-5202



FOREIGN TRADE DIVISION

Each month the Foreign Trade Division of the United States Census Bureau (Census) releases the *U.S. International Trade in Goods and Services* report which is one of the principal economic indicators for the United States. This report along with other information can be found on our Web site at: www.census.gov/foreign-trade. Information available includes:

- “U.S. International Trade in Goods & Services,” current and historical issues
- Information on the Automated Export System (AES)
- Schedule B commodity classification search
- Export and import statistics by country or commodity.
- U.S. foreign trade export regulations

DATA COMPILATION

- The paper Shipper’s Export Declaration (SED Form 7525-V) has been revised and published to rename, renumber, or add data elements to match the reporting requirements for the Automated Export System (AES). The new SED became effective April 1, 2001.
- Automated Export System (AES) – developed as a joint venture of the U.S. Customs Service, the Census Bureau, other Federal agencies and the exporting community to electronically capture the Shipper’s Export Declaration (SED) information and the Carrier Outbound Manifest data.
 - **AESDirect** – The Census’ free Internet-based system for filing Shipper’s Export Declaration (SED) through the Automated Export System (AES). The AES is an electronic alternative to filing the paper SED. Currently there are 4,992 AESDirect participants.
 - **AESPCLink** – Windows based desktop PC component of the AESDirect Service. AESPCLink allows any AESDirect filer to enter their SEDs off-line and connect to AESDirect using the Internet to submit their SEDs.

DATA QUALITY

In order for Census to accurately analyze, review, correct and publish quality statistics, we continuously interact with other government agencies. Census and USDA have established a working group which established liaisons within each agency, to communicate and attempt to resolve data discrepancies in a timely manner. In addition, procedures have been established for Census to electronically provide USDA with data revisions on a flow basis. These electronic data revisions will be provided in a format compatible with USDA data products.

CLASSIFICATION CODES

A revision to the international Harmonized System level will become effective in January 2002. This revision will result in changes at the 6-digit and 4-digit levels of the Harmonized System and the shifting of commodities from one are to another, including from one chapter to another. As a result, approximately 1,000 new 10-digit codes will be added to both the import and export schedules with many of these being renumbered. About 700 current codes will be deleted from each system. To get an idea of the changes at the 8-digit Harmonized Tariff Schedule, Annotated level, you can access "Investigation #1205-5" dated June 2001 on the United States International Trade Commission's (USITC) website at www.usitc.gov. Because of the necessity to maintain comparability between the import and export schedules, similar changes will be made to the Schedule B Export Schedule.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit our Website at: www.census.gov/foreign-trade
Visit the AES Websites at: www.customs.gov/aes or www.aesdirect.gov
Visit NAICS Website at: www.census.gov/naics

Foreign Trade Data Products: (301) 457-2227 or Fax (301) 457-2647

Correspondence can be written or faxed to:

Foreign Trade Division
U.S. Census Bureau
Washington, D.C. 20233-0001
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Inquiries about our published statistics can be written, e-mailed, or faxed to:

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NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE STATISTICS DIVISION

WHAT'S NEW?

NASS Mission Statement: To provide timely, accurate, and useful statistics in service to U.S. Agriculture.

Crops

Annual forage production in eight States was published for the first time in the *Crop Production 200 Summary*. The forage production included all types of harvested hay and haylage on a dry equivalent basis using standard conversion factors. Similar data are being added to the *2002 Census of Agriculture* for all States.

NASS Strengthened the end of season 2001 wheat by class estimates by collecting additional information on acreage, yield, and production by class in 21 States, to supplement the current wheat by variety surveys.

Additional corn objective yield count information will be published in this year's *Crop Production* reports. New information on the plant population distribution across States and additional number of ears by month will be included.

Rice acreage by class was updates in the *September 2001 Crop Production* report. Significant marketing of the crop occur before publication of the annual *Crop Production Summary* in January. This update was made to ensure all market participants had the most timely data possible.

NASS provided special information on the nitrogen fertilizer supply situation in the spring of 2001. This data were published by State in the *Weekly Crop Progress* reports on April 2, April 30, and June 4, 2001.

NASS completed its first nursery production survey in the 17 major producing States this past spring. The results from the survey were published in the *Nursery Crops 2000 Summary* in August 2001.

Livestock

U.S. and Canadian Cattle, Monthly Canadian Cattle on Feed, and a condensed *Quarterly Canadian Hog* report are now available on the NASS web site under "Canada Livestock" on the "Publications" menu.

NASS released a *Cattle Predator Loss* report in May 2001. This report included State and U.S. information on the number and value of cattle and calves lost from animal predators.

A new biweekly report on U.S. milkfat prices and purchases for Class II and total utilization was initiated starting with the May 11, 2001 release.

The *Weekly Broiler Hatchery* report was expanded to include Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, and Oklahoma. Data collected include broiler eggs set in incubators and broiler chickens placed.

A special report *U.S. Hog Breeding Herd Structure*, was issued June 2001. This report contained a summary of the changes in the structure of the U.S. hog breeding herd by size of operation and trends in its breeding herd efficiency.

A special cattle report, *U.S. Cattle Supplies and Disposition*, was issued September 2001 and provided information on U.S. cattle supply and disposition numbers and trends which have implications for future cattle supplies.

Environmental, Economics, and Demographics

Agricultural Chemical Usage – Swine and Swine Facilities report was released December 2000 based on a survey of 17 selected States. The report provided insecticide use information, such as application rate, number of applications, active ingredients, and method of application.

Agricultural Chemical Usage – Sheep and Sheep Facilities report was released May 2001. This new report provided detail on percent of head treated, application rates, and total amount of chemicals applied to sheep, and total amount of chemicals used on sheep facilities.

Agricultural Chemical Usage – Field Crops report was released May 2001. It included for the first time chemical use on sugarbeets. Data were provided for percent of acres treated, rates per application and crop year, number of applications, and total amount applied.

Agricultural Chemical Usage – Vegetables report was released July 2001. This report has been published biennially since 1990. This year's report contained an additional 12 crops and 5 States for a total coverage of 42 crops and 19 States.

Pest Management Practices Summary was released May 2001. This concluded a four year study to assist USDA in evaluating participation in Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices. Future plans are to continue publishing pest management practices data by integrating it with the annual chemical use surveys.

Fruit and Vegetable Agricultural Practices report was released June 2001. This new report was conducted to establish a baseline of good agricultural practices used by growers and packers of fresh market fruits and vegetables to ensure food safety.

Agricultural Economics and Land Ownership Survey (AELOS) was released in August 2001 and is a follow-on survey to the *1997 Census of Agriculture*, historically conducted every ten years. *AELOS* presented information about assets, expenditures, and debt on farm operations at the U.S., regional, and State levels. It also included acres operated by hire managers, acres owned, value of land and buildings, land use, and types of leases. Demographic information such as age, race, location of residence, and occupations of landlords and operators was also provided.

Farm Computer Usage and Ownership was released July 2001. This was the third report about computer usage and provided 1997, 1999, and 2001 comparisons. The report showed the percent of operators by economic class and farm type using the Internet. It also included the percent of operators making purchases of agricultural inputs, engaging in marketing activities, etc.



World Agricultural Outlook Board (WAOB) Office of the Chief Economist, USDA

Comments about World Agricultural Outlook Board programs may be directed to Gerald A. Bange, Chairperson, Room 5143 South Building, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250-3182; (202) 720-6030; gbange@oce.usda.gov.

USDA Forecasts and Release Dates on the Internet

You can reach any USDA agricultural forecast from www.usda.gov/news/calindex.htm, where you'll find a combined monthly calendar of reports from NASS, ERS, FAS, and WAOB. To read a report, just click on its title on the calendar.

2002 Release Dates for World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates Report (WASDE)

The WASDE will be released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern Time on the following dates in 2002: Jan. 11, Feb. 8, Mar. 8, Apr. 10, May 10, June 12, July 11, Aug. 12, Sep. 12, Oct. 11, Nove. 12, Dec. 10.

Recent Developments

Better access to the Weekly Weather and Crop Bulletin

The Joint Agricultural Weather Facility – run by WAOB and the National Weather Service – issues the Weekly Weather and Crop Bulletin. The report provides extensive detail on U.S. and international crop weather impacts. The Bulletin is now available from USDA's report site at Cornell University, <http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu>, as well as on the WAOB home page. The Cornell site includes all back issues of the Bulletin dating to 1993 in Adobe Acrobat format.

Major Revision of China Grain Stocks Published

In May 2001, USDA made significant historical revisions to China's grains supply and use balance sheets to reflect a higher level of ending stocks. The changes were reflected in the May 10, 2001 WASDE report. The revisions resulted in a much higher, but more realistic level of grain stocks currently held in China. Historical revisions can be downloaded from www.usda.gov/oce/waob/wasde/wasde.htm.

USDA Strengthening Commodity Forecasting Program

WAOB is coordinating actions by USDA agencies (OCE, ERS, FAS, AMS) to implement recommendations of the Datatrak/Price Waterhouse Coopers study, which gauged the strengths and weakness of the Department's commodity forecasting program. The thrust of this effort has been to increase interagency interaction to draw on the unique expertise in each agency.

The Secretary of Agriculture issued a memorandum defining responsibilities of agencies that contribute to the interagency commodity forecasting process. Each agency then signed a memorandum of understanding agreeing to responsibilities and commitment of resources.

In December 2001, WAOB sponsored the first interagency of the Department's commodity situation and outlook program. Taking part were 125 USDA analysts and representatives from the University of Illinois, Montana State University, ConAgra, U.S. Corn Growers, Refco, and the Senate Agriculture Committee

WAOB cooperated with ERS to start a pilot program of conference calls after release of the WASDE report with USDA livestock and grain analysts and university extension specialists.

A committee including WAOB, ERS, and FAS analysts has been set up to resolve trade data discrepancies and work on establishing a single USDA trade database. The committee will oversee how USDA manages its U.S. trade database and work with the Bureau of the Census to correct data errors and adopt revisions.

WAOB, FAS, and ERS are in the process of building a prototype 'center of excellence' website. China will be the topic of the first center, bringing together key information across agencies.

WAOB has submitted an interagency budget initiative to build a commodity-focused website. It would combine USDA commodity-related data from multiple sources in a single data warehouse.

WAOB Expands Ag Weather Observation Network

Farmers depend on localized weather data collected from agricultural areas. Specialized weather data is equally vital for fighting forest fires and forecasting water supplies and drought. WAOB works closely with other USDA and Federal agencies to make specialized agricultural weather data available.

In cooperation with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service and several state climatology offices, WAOB is creating an agricultural weather observation network to fill gaps in the existing national weather data collection system. WAOB maintains a data analysis office in Stoneville, Mississippi that collects data from soil and climate stations installed in key growing areas of Missouri and Mississippi. Additional stations, funded

by WAOB, are being installed this year in Missouri, Iowa, and Minnesota and are planned for Alabama, Mississippi, and Maryland.

WAOB voiced strong support for maintaining adequate coverage of agricultural areas by the cooperative observer (COOP) network maintained by the National Weather Service. As a result, NWS gave a higher priority to agricultural needs as it planned to reduce sites, and has indicated it will place custom-designed agricultural stations in about 1,000 of the 10,000 COOP sites.

WAOB coordinated USDA's response to a decision by the U.S. Geological Survey to terminate the Landsat 5 and Landsat 7 satellites. USGS reversed its decision and agreed to keep the satellites operational. USDA is the largest civilian user of satellite data.

WAOB has been helping the Forest Service modernize its weather information system, to make use of National Weather Service data that is now delivered by satellite, and data from the Forest Service' own weather network.

USDA Chief Meteorologist Supports National Drought Council and WMO

An Interim National Drought Council was created in 2000 with the Secretary of Agriculture designated as the Federal Chair. The Council is responsible for maintaining accurate monitoring and reporting of drought conditions and identifying drought impacts on agriculture, forest fires, and water by region. The Chief Meteorologist coordinated preparation for the Council of "A Comprehensive Framework to Enhance Drought Monitoring and Prediction."

The Chief Meteorologist also serves as President of the Committee on Agricultural Meteorology of the World Meteorological Organization. The Committee is leading international forum for improving weather data and forecasting in support of agriculture, especially in developing countries and fostering international cooperation in sharing of crop-weather data.

WAOB Data and Products

Convenient Options for Getting the WASDE Report

The World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates report is posted first at the WAOB home page: www.usda.gov/oce/waob/wasde/wasde.htm. You'll find it a short time later on the USDA Economics and Statistics System: usda.mannlib.cornell.edu. You can download and read the WASDE report in either Adobe Acrobat format or in plain text format. There is no charge to use these sites.

Prefer getting reports by e-mail? You can request free e-mail subscriptions to any report issued by WAOB, ERS, or NASS. The reports are automatically sent to you shortly after release. Just go to: <http://www.usda.mannlib.cornell.edu>, click on "e-mail reports" and select desired titles. Or, send an e-mail with "lists" as the text message to: usda-reports@usda.mannlib.cornell.edu. Leave the subject line blank. You will get sign-up instructions by return e-mail.

You can also retrieve the WASDE report by fax from the ERS Autofax system. For instructions call (202) 694-5700 from your fax machine handset and follow voice prompts to retrieve document 66900.

Historical Data Disk

An archive of historical monthly supply and demand estimates back to 1973, “WASDE Crop, Livestock, and Dairy Estimates,” is now available in spreadsheet form on disk from ERS-NASS (1-800-999-6779). This database also can be downloaded from <http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu>.

Latest Long-term Commodity Projections

USDA Agricultural Baseline Projections to 2010 offer a future scenario for supply and demand for major U.S. commodities, farm income, and exports based on key assumptions. Order the report, #WAOB-2001-1, from ERS-NASS, by calling 1-800-999-6779. Download it at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/baseline/>.

A new baseline report to 2100 will be released at the USDA Outlook Forum and posted with historical data and graphics on the ERS website in February 2002.

Daily Crop-Weather Update

Read a national summary of agricultural weather impacts each weekday morning at www.usda.gov/agency/oce/waob/jawf

Crop Handbook Available on the Internet

Major World Crop Areas and Climatic Profiles is a popular reference for tracking crop production around the world. Maps, climate and production data are shown for many crops and countries. Updates portions with interactive maps are now available at www.usda.gov/oce/waob/jawf/profiles/mwcacp.htm

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Eric Wenberg Foreign Agricultural Service

Steve Wiyatt..... National Agricultural Statistics
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Summary of
Questions, Answers, and Comments
Chicago USDA Data Users Meeting
October 15, 2001

GENERAL QUESTIONS (Q), ANSWERS (R), and COMMENTS (C)

Issue: Crops and Weather

- Q. Who reports on the weekly *Crop Progress* report and what are the standards for reporting?
- R. Respondents are usually professional agriculturalists at the county level. Reporters include county agents, Farm Service Agency (FSA) personnel, bankers and farm credit officials, and farmers knowledgeable about the crop conditions and progress for their county. Standard definitions are provided to respondents each spring and definitions are available on the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) website at: <http://www.usda.gov/nass/pubs/cwterms.htm>.
- Q. Do respondents make any field counts for condition ratings or crop progress?
- R. No, the definitions are subjective. An example is the definition for fair condition: “Less than normal crop condition. Yield loss is a possibility but extent is unknown. Pastures are providing generally adequate feed but still less than normal for the time of year.”
- Q. Are the definitions the same everywhere and do all respondents have the same interpretation of the categories?
- R. As noted above, there are a standard set of definitions. Since the ratings are subjective, not all individuals will rate a crop exactly the same. One item to be noted is that the crop progress reporters are the same individuals from week to week and as much as possible from year to year.
- C. Crop progress ratings for early October suggested a lower yield than published in the October *Crop Production* report.
- C. The grain trade lives by the weekly *Crop Progress* report. We should be concerned with the data quality within this report. It needs more resources and improvement. I think that some people reporting do not even get out into the field. If it can’t be improved, then maybe it should be dropped.
- C. Rapid changes in genetics the past few years have changed the physiology of the plants. Conditions for the crop may not equate to the same yield as the recent past.

Q.&C. What new information was available between the September and October *Crop Production* reports? What caused the jump in yields? The crop progress condition ratings did not support a jump in yields.

R. The increase in corn and soybean yield forecasts between September and October were based on both the farmer reported survey and the objective yield survey data. Both surveys supported the yield increase. Very few sample plots were harvested in September. Over sixty percent of the soybean objective yield sample plots had been harvested by the end of the October survey period. Similarly, the corn objective yield survey showed a larger grain weight than was expected in September. As you noted, the crop ratings were not as supportive of the increase. As commented earlier, there have been significant changes to crop genetics the past few years and these changes may or may not be reflected in the condition ratings.

Q. Is there a difference between the September and October methodology used for forecasting yield?

R. No. In both months we conduct objective yield surveys in major States and obtain farmer reported yields in all States. As the crops mature and harvest begins, the forecasting accuracy increases as actual pod and ear weights are used. As noted earlier, over sixty percent of soybean plots were harvested for the October survey. We have published additional objective yield survey information on plant, pod, and ear counts with comparisons to previous years in the monthly 2002 *Crop Production* reports.

Q. Have there been changes in drought forecasting?

R. The U.S. Drought Monitor has tried to separate the Climate Prediction Center's climate forecast from the current drought information. The drought monitor represents the current state of affairs and does not include forecasts.

Issue: Chemical Use Statistics

C.&Q. Cherry, peach, and grape chemical usage data were recently discontinued for several States with smaller acreage. This information is important to many data users. Can NASS consider selecting States based on pest profiles, not just production?

R. It is extremely expensive to measure chemical usage on crops with small acreage. NASS has been working to maximize the area covered with the program.

C.&Q. Is there any discussion to broaden the stakeholder group for environmental statistics? We are extremely interested in having NASS data for our stakeholders and might be willing to pay to keep coverage for these crops in our area.

- R. NASS has tried to ensure that as many stakeholders as possible are represented for all of its programs. However, we are still required to keep the programs within the available resources. We work with many groups including universities and State departments of agriculture who sponsor part or all of specific programs through cooperative and trust agreements. We would be happy to explore these possibilities with you.

Issue: Livestock, Price Reporting, and Cold Storage

- Q. Were the revisions released in the September *Quarterly Hogs and Pigs* report based on survey information or administrative data? Follow-up question: Is the survey data or balance sheet more important?
- R. Data for the September revisions were based on administrative data. This includes import, export, and slaughter data. The survey information is the basis for all initial livestock estimates.
- Q. Is there a relationship between the number of sows bred and pig crop?
- R. A relationship exists between the number of females bred and number of sows farrowing in 90 days. The pig crop in turn has a relationship with the number of sows farrowing.
- Q. What action will NASS consider taking to address the current problems with the monthly hog report?
- R. NASS will continue to collect monthly hog data to build a history for the monthly survey. After a sufficient history has been collected, a review of the relationship between the quarterly, monthly, and administrative data will be completed. This may require 2 to 3 years of data.
- Q. Do the monthly and quarterly surveys ask questions on the pig crop using consistent terminology?
- R. The monthly survey asks for pigs born. The quarterly collects pigs saved. The short reference period for the monthly survey does not allow for the normal and larger death loss collected on the quarterly questionnaire.
- Q. Are we going to continue to publish weight groups in the *Quarterly Hogs and Pigs* report?
- R. Yes, at this time there are no plans to change the quarterly report. However, one reason for obtaining pigs born on a monthly basis is to eliminate the weight group breakdowns.
- C.&Q. We appreciate the dairy reports and the new data published on heifers in the *Cattle* report. Can we get the *Milkfat Prices* report weekly?

- R. The *Milkfat Prices* report is not likely to go to a weekly report. Data in some States are unavailable on a weekly basis. Also, the reporting is not mandatory.
- Q. How does NASS validate the data if reporting is not mandatory?
- R. NASS does not have the authority to audit plants. We have quality control measures and analyze the information by comparing to history, etc. Also, NASS visits plants from time to time to ensure the data requested are being reported as accurately as possible.
- Q. Why are chickens and turkeys on two different pages in the *Cold Storage* report?
- R. Poultry and turkeys were originally published on the same page. However, as other items were added for other products the page formatting forced the turkeys to a new page. Livestock Branch will review to see if all data for poultry and turkeys can be put on one page.

Issue: Mandatory Price Reporting

- C.&Q. Since the beginning of mandatory reporting, there has been very little information concerning sheep. The more than 7,000 Iowa sheep producers feel abandoned. The sheep producers need more data on prices. Will there be more prices released?
- R. The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has not been able to release sheep information primarily because of the narrow confidentiality guideline used under the Livestock Mandatory Reporting Act of 1999, the ACT. Modification of the guideline and the way reports are aggregated has since allowed the daily release of national and regional lamb, live and carcass data, as well as boxed lamb meat. AMS also began releasing a *National Carcass Lamb Cutout* report.
- C. Usually AMS provides a period of parallel reporting whenever new reports are released. Under mandatory reporting, users did not get parallel reports. Please overlap the new and old data series in the future.
- R. The mandatory reporting regulations did not allow AMS to provide parallel report releases.
- Q. How is data for boxed beef reporting verified?
- R. Information is electronically reported to AMS. Our reporters review the data before reports are generated and make comparisons to daily slaughter and all reported beef data. In addition, compliance staff conducts audit reviews of packer reporting procedures, reported data, and compliance with the ACT.

- C.&Q. Currently there is no volume information published with the mandatory premium reports. Do you know if it is inconsequential?
- R. The weekly cattle premium report AMS releases only provides various premiums intended to be used by packers for the upcoming week, not the volume of premiums. The daily swine reports provide a base price and net price which does give industry a measurement of premiums.
- C. Since mandatory reporting began, reporters have not been able to talk with the red meat industry participants. The information picked up by these reporters under voluntary reporting was used by analyst and market participants and is missed under mandatory reporting.
- R. Our reporters can discuss the market situation with industry although they cannot pass on any price information until reports are released. All reported data are electronically submitted and cannot be discussed until all reports are released so that all participants have equal opportunity to see the data.
- Q. Can AMS combine weekly livestock data into a data base? Currently, you have to pick off each week and put data together from the weekly livestock mandatory reports.
- R. AMS has put together weekly summary data which is available each Monday at 11:30 AM Central Time. AMS is providing weekly totals as well as comparisons with a week and year ago data.
- Q. Can AMS provide the ability to customize data searches, maybe in XML?
- R. AMS has completed a pilot project that may provide drill down capabilities for our data. Our Web site includes a search feature for historical reports but not the capability to extract specific data from a report.
- Q. What years are the livestock cost of production estimates based on? Is there any cost by size of operations?
- R. Base livestock cost of production survey years were 1998 for hogs and 1996 for cattle and calves. The dairy cost of production survey was conducted in 2000. Information is provided by size of operation. This information can be found on the Economic Research Service (ERS) website under cost and production, at:
<http://www.ers.usda.gov/data/costsandreturns>.
- C. Databases within USDA are sometimes dated. I hope USDA continues to support the work being done at the Livestock Marketing Information Center.
- R. ERS is in the process of converting everything to databases. Individuals authoring the detailed reports are also key to the associated databases. ERS is attempting to put more

rigor into this process to assure data are available in a timely manner, and are always interested in working with colleagues to help us all do the best job possible.

C. Please keep totals and percentages in the databases. Otherwise the various data users must calculate them each time they are updated.

C.&Q. ERS is moving to more value-added reports and we are taking special note of your comment. One key question for all of you: "What information do you need after the World Agricultural Supply and Demand, WASDE, report"? Any additional input would be very useful.

R. Any data that impacts a WASDE number and we need to know why.

Issues: Trade

Q. First, I would like to thank the World Agricultural Outlook Board (WAOB) on providing the industry with notification that a change would be published on Chinese grain stocks. How confident is the USDA on the revised estimates of stock for China?

R. The WAOB had been concerned about the level of Chinese stock for some time. At the Outlook Forum in February 2001, several individuals inquired about the recently released FAO grain stocks estimates for China which were several times larger than WAOB estimates at that time. We organized an interagency task force to examine the issue of Chinese stocks. In addition, it became apparent that weather difficulties were going to result in another poor wheat crop and if consumption levels were unchanged from the previous year, it would result in negative stocks at the end of 2001/02. The task force was only able to obtain limited official information on the size of Chinese stocks since they regard such information as a State secret. While visiting China, both the Chinese National Bureau of Statistics and Ministry of Agriculture officials indicated they were undertaking surveys to determine grain stocks. We received no information from these surveys before publishing our first forecast of China's supply, use, and stocks of grain for 2001/02. After publication, a Chinese official commented that WAOB levels were close to reality. Since then, there have been indications from other Chinese officials that the USDA estimates were on target. Recent prices in China would indicate that our revised stocks better reflect the current Chinese stocks situation. Our previous estimates were too low for a country that size. We did not attempt to estimate a level of on-farm stocks in our revised stocks numbers. FAO did attempt to estimate on-farm stocks in their revised estimates. We attempted to limit our stocks estimates to only those potentially available to the market.

C.&Q. As I understand, the current WASDE forecasts for China do not assume that they are in WTO. What will precipitate the assumption that China is a member of the WTO?

R. We will not assume that China is in the WTO until the accession agreement is signed.

C.&Q. It is important that we get the export data information in a timely manner. Also, we would like to receive the data broken out to the different export country destinations. Can you provide more background on Mexico meat export data?

R. We know meat exports to Mexico are a problem. Information is not required by law to be reported on a timely basis. We are working on a solution. WAOB has tasked the Foreign Agricultural Service and ERS to work with Bureau of Census on the issue and the organizations are talking a lot more. We need to recognize that Census does not collect this data just for our benefit. We are working with Census to identify the problem areas and are working jointly to implement improvements. We are making some progress. Logically, we may have to deviate from Census data if we determine the data are not good. This would be a deviation from our long standing policy. We would do so only with the written concurrence of Census.

We have an agreement for export/import data reciprocity with Canada. We never had this type of agreement with Mexico. Maybe we need to pursue this.

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